



MEMORANDUM

Soccer - Temp

TO: Parks and Recreation Board Members

FROM: Michael J. Heitz, AIA, Director
Parks and Recreation Department

DATE: October 26, 1993

SUBJECT: Children's Museum Location

On September 14, 1993 Ms. Debbie Edwards, Executive Director of the Austin Children's Museum, addressed the Parks Board regarding the potential location of the Children's Museum on parkland. Due to the success of their programs, the Children's Museum needs a larger building. The Town Lake Comprehensive Plan recommends inclusion of the Children's Museum in the park. Ms. Edwards requested Parks Board clarification whether the Children's Museum is still welcome within Town Lake Park.

The Town Lake Comprehensive Plan, adopted by City Council in a 1988 ordinance, characterizes five types of park uses in the Town Lake Metropolitan Park. The five park types are: Preserve, which is undeveloped areas such as Red Bud Isle and the north shore of the Colorado River next to the Highway 183 bridge; Neighborhood Park, which is a portion of Town Lake frequently used by the adjoining neighborhood, such as Fiesta Gardens; Community Park, an area utilized by people from the entire city, such as Zilker Park; Cultural Park, an area featuring culturally important facilities for city-wide visitors, as with the Garden Center; and the Urban Waterfront, a point of close contact between high urban density and the natural, scenic lake, exemplified by the West First Street frontage on Town Lake.

The Cultural Park category is park use in which the predominantly open, green space of the park is complemented by a public facility for theatrical performances, a museum, or concert. The presence of a cultural facility at the edge of public open space has been a successful combination in many of the best parks in the nation.

Auditorium Shores, defined as the land between Town Lake and Barton Springs Road, and from South First Street and Lee Barton Drive, is one of the areas referenced in the Plan as a Cultural Park. Currently, the area contains the Dougherty Arts Center near Barton Springs Road and Dawson Road, Palmer Auditorium, the Coliseum, and events held on the Town Lake shoreline. The Plan includes the Children's Museum as one of the examples of an appropriate cultural facility, and envisions it being placed across

Dawson Road from the Daugherty Arts Museum.

The Children's Museum needs to identify a new site by December, and wishes confirmation that a location on the park, in the vicinity of Barton Springs Road and Dawson Road, is available.

I recommend the Parks Board confirm that the Children's Museum would be an attractive activity in the park, and that a site in the proposed location be made available.



Michael J. Heitz, AIA, Director
Parks and Recreation Department

PLAN CONCEPT

A Vision for Town Lake Park

Input from both neighborhood and business sources emphasized the need to maintain a dominant parklike sensibility through the Town Lake Corridor. The Town Lake Comprehensive Plan recognizes and embraces these views as a springboard for a new vision of Town Lake Park.

Town Lake, at the heart of the city, should project beauty, serenity, and naturalness. It should be the garden focus of more intensively developed districts which adjoin it. There are very few cities in the United States which have such an opportunity to remain "green" in their core, and there are very few cities for whom such a strong physical gesture would be more in keeping with the sentiments of the population.

This, of course, should not preclude extensive activity of varying intensities along the Town Lake frontage. Cultural, recreational, and even commercial events should enliven the Corridor, but they can and should be injected at a density and with a design sensitivity that always keeps them in a park setting. A concert facility can be a large, obtrusive building surrounded by parking or it can be nestled into the topography, veiled in vegetation, and served by parking out of the public view. A museum can be monumental, dominating, and urban in character, or it can be gently set like a jewel in the natural landscape. A ballfield cluster can be simply an efficient facility dominated visually by signs, light standards, and bleachers, or it can be interwoven with vegetation and topography so as not only to provide additional shade and amenity to participants but also to reduce visual intrusion into the landscape. Buildings and other physical gestures in the Town Lake Corridor must be made integral and sympathetic with the landscape.

Private development adjacent to Town Lake parklands should also take visual cues from the natural environment. Building massing should demur to open spaces, avoiding clashes of scale. Building materials, colors, and textures should be sympathetic to landscape materials, colors, and textures. Compatible functions, especially those relating to recreation and public service activities, should be oriented toward parklands and open spaces.

The goal of both public and private development should be to create continuity in the entire Corridor area so that the lake frontage from Tom Miller Dam to Montopolis Bridge seems like one great park, gently inhabited to greater or lesser degrees by both public and private activities. Within the district there should be great variations from almost totally undisturbed and natural to an urbane and refined park character. The "green" quality should, however, always be dominant.

Design will be the paramount issue in accomplishing these goals; design of both public and private improvement, design of both landscape and building elements. Structures placed along Town Lake should not be generic in character. Insofar as is possible, they should be particular to Austin and Town Lake. The sort of bench or light standard which might be appropriate in an urban plaza would not be appropriate in Town Lake Park. There should be a distinctiveness which gives a special sense of place and cohesiveness to the Corridor parklands.

Five Park Types

The rich diversity of environmental and cultural conditions surrounding Town Lake suggest that this vision of Town Lake Park could be not one, but many parks, offering a very wide range of activities and experiences. This concept is strengthened by the diversity of the needs, aspirations and visions of Austinites for Town Lake:

- The desire to maintain a more natural character in the lake's unspoiled areas; to preserve the best of its natural features.
- To provide, where appropriate, for neighborhood cultural expression and recreational needs.
- To better accommodate existing uses within the parks while providing a richer array of activities and experiences for all age groups, interests and abilities.
- To accommodate cultural activities and events in the beautiful setting of the Town Lake parklands.

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- To create a mutually beneficial, synergistic relationship between Town Lake and the downtown area.

In response to these issues and natural conditions, five park types are proposed to occur along Town Lake. Each of them makes a special contribution toward the range of activities which should occur in this, the richest and most extensive urban open space in the city. Each type also carries with it physical implications which will keep the Town Lake district varied and diverse in character.

The Preserve - The lowest density park type is reserved for large areas of natural topography and native vegetation where human activity is limited, and the near total retention of natural landscape is appropriate. Because Town Lake is man-made and the impoundment of the Colorado River has, in itself, altered the natural landscape, preservation as an idea cannot be applied compulsively. There are, however, significant areas in the study district which merit preservation or restoration of more natural conditions.

The cliffs and bluffs which rise from Town Lake, for example, eloquently bespeak the time-formed geology of the region. Occasional springs can be found emanating from their limestone strata. These natural edges form a dramatic and appropriate backdrop for the water course itself.

Isolated pockets of land such as Red Bud Isle and the north shore of the free-flowing Colorado River just west of Montopolis Bridge offer opportunities for districts apart from the city which surrounds them, wild areas in strong contrast to the tamed urban landscape. These areas should remain dominated by tangles of native vegetation. Their rugged rock outcroppings should not be softened for human use. They should stand as reminders of the physical character that was here before human settlement.

Preserve districts should nurture both vegetation and wildlife which cannot occur in more "civilized" areas of Town Lake Park. Native grasses and undergrowth would be encouraged. Animal habitats, particularly waterfowl nesting areas, would be protected.

This notion of preservation does not preclude human use in the Preserve districts, but implies restrictions on that use. Nature trails might be introduced but would likely be elevated or other-

wise designed to be as unobtrusive as possible. Numbers of users would be limited and perhaps even controlled by adjacent interpretive facilities, adding an educational dimension to the Preserve.

Austinites are proud of the beauty of the central Texas Hill Country which their city occupies. The growth of the city has, perhaps necessarily, compromised some of that natural beauty. It is important, however, to keep some small areas sacrosanct to maintain reminders of the native beauty of the region.

The Neighborhood Park - The second park type is in response to Town Lake Park's proximities to a number of the city's longstanding residential neighborhoods. Town Lake Park should be seen as belonging to the whole city, but it should also transform itself occasionally to become an adjunct and transition to the neighborhoods which border it. The people who live in Montopolis, East Austin, Travis Heights, the Barton Springs areas, Old West Austin and Tarrytown should be able to stake a special claim to portions of Town Lake Park.

These park areas would include neighborhood oriented amenities such as informal ball fields and courts, places for birthday parties, church picnics, festivals, and other such neighborhood gatherings. There should be playgrounds, strolling paths and picnic pavilions. Activities should be able to be informal and casual -- a pick-up game of basketball as opposed to tournament play.

Access to these parks should not preclude use by outsiders but should be clearly oriented to neighborhood users. Neighborhood Parks should be somewhat tucked away. Their scale should be intimate, with their emphasis on individuals and small groups rather than on massive gatherings.

Austin is proud of its fine neighborhoods. The neighborhoods adjacent to Town Lake are among the strongest and most livable in the city. The Neighborhood Parks within Town Lake Park should both draw character from those neighborhoods and also give back amenities which could strengthen and help maintain their desirability for the future.

The Community Park - The largest quantity of land in Town Lake Park will be devoted to Community Parks, districts with traditional park activities oriented to the entire Austin community. This park type is a focal element in most great cities, both in America and abroad.

The Community Park is the great outdoor living room of the city. It is a focus for recreation and outdoor activity. It is a place for large-scale sports and games, a place for jogging, walking, strolling and exercise. The scale of the Community Park, necessarily large to accommodate larger groups of people, requires extensive contiguous areas.

The Community Park is dominantly a green place, although the demands of sports, recreation, picnicking, and other gatherings require durable surface treatment. It is, therefore, largely planned and landscaped rather than simply natural. Colorful and lavish gardens can often accent its beauty.

The Community Park requires services such as restrooms, food kiosks, security control and recreation concessions, and good management is a key to their success.

The best example of a Community Park in Austin currently is Zilker Park. Its mixture of sports, recreation, picnicking, informal gatherings and special happenings such as a ride on the train or the annual Christmas tree exemplify the kinds of things that should happen in a Community Park. Enhancing and extending Community Parks in Town Lake Park would help reduce overuse, would give greater geographical distribution and easier accessibility and would provide a much greater range of places and events.

The Cultural Park - Many great cities have found a compatibility between cultural institutions such as museums, theaters and concert halls, and the graciousness of a natural park setting. Places to view art or theater or to hear music have a similar pace and ambiance as places for strolling, picnicking, and enjoying nature. Groups have been established in Austin to plan futures for a number of cultural institutions, including the Botanical Gardens, Children's Museum, Science Museum, Discovery Hall, Planetarium and Music Museum, which would greatly enhance the quality of life in the city. The Cultural Park would be a home for these activities.

The Cultural Park must be, predominantly, a park. It is a green space first and foremost. The facilities which inhabit it must have an architectural character compatible with and perhaps even subservient to the park. The Kimball Museum in Fort Worth serves as an excellent example of a significant cultural institution which complements and enhances its park-like surroundings. Whereas the Community Park is largely oriented toward recreation and would be generally informal in charac-

ter, the Cultural Park would be a quieter, probably somewhat more axial or formal place. There might be reflecting pools, allees of trees, gardens and amphitheaters that might appear too structured in the Community Park.

The definition of "cultural" should extend beyond institutions and include places for eating and talking, and informal as well as formal musical entertainment. There should be activities for children as well as adults. The Cultural Park should be a garden of active delights with places to see and experience, things to do and watch.

The Urban Waterfront - The final park type which should find appropriate application in Town Lake Park deals with the juxtaposition of city and open space. The Urban Waterfront would be the point at which high density urban development meets greenery and lake. There is an appealing tension in many cities between hard and soft, dense and sparse, man-made and natural where high density development stands in contrast to soft, lush natural spaces. The Urban Waterfront of Town Lake Park should revel in these contrasts. It should be notably green and parklike in contrast to the buildings and streets of the city itself but capable of handling very heavy use because of its closeness to a large number of users.

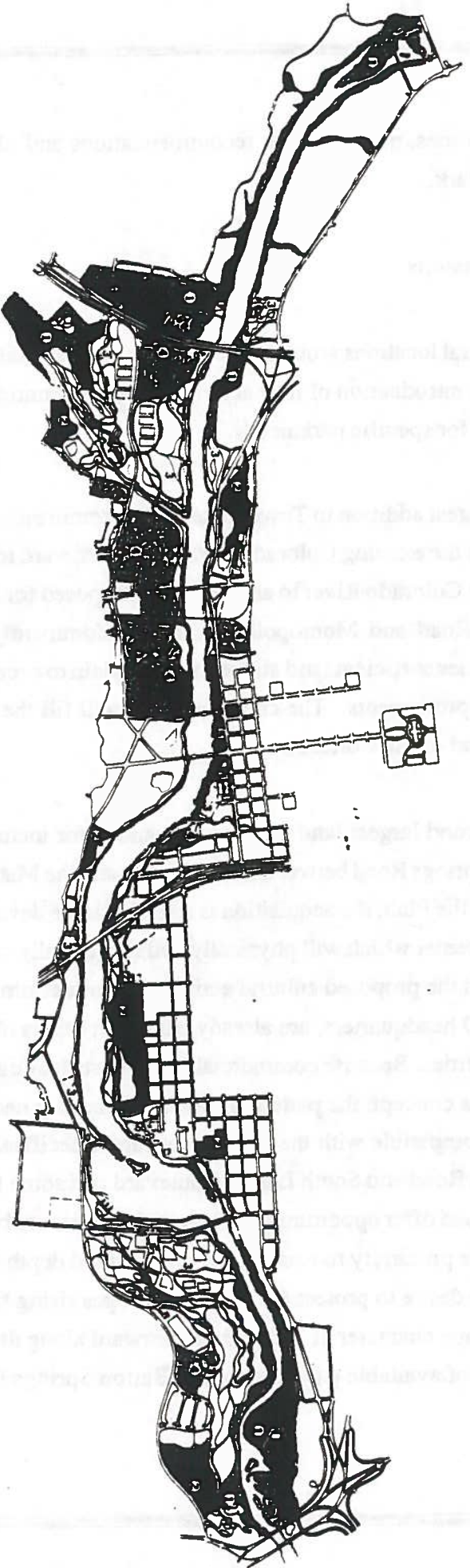
The Urban Waterfront should contain promenades and overlooks and be scenic and well kept. It should have some limited areas for group activities but should be largely available for casual activities like walking, lunching in the park, sitting and reading a newspaper.

The Urban Waterfront is a springboard for making the ambiance of Town Lake Park permeate the city. Through the creeks and tree-lined streets, the softness and graciousness of Town Lake Park should extend into downtown. Landscape and water features deep within the city should signal a connection to Town Lake, drawing particularly on activity centers such as East Sixth Street and making the obvious connections between these centers and Town Lake Park.

The locations of the five park zones within the Corridor are dictated to a large degree by the Corridor's diverse environmental conditions, landscape characters and existing development patterns. In most cases, distinct boundaries do not exist between adjacent zones, so that their characters might blend to a degree, each borrowing from the other as appropriate. Within the framework

Plan Concept: Five Park Types

- 0 Existing Parkland
- 1 The Preserve
- 2 The Neighborhood Park
- 3 The Community Park
- 4 The Cultural Park
- 5 The Urban Waterfront



of the five park zones, more specific recommendations and ideas are developed into a master plan for Town Lake Park.

Parkland Expansions

In several locations around the perimeter of Town Lake, expansion of the existing parkland will facilitate the introduction of new activities, provide continuity to the park and provide space at critical locations for specific park needs.

The largest addition to Town Lake Park recommended in the Comprehensive Plan is a 210 acre expansion of the existing Colorado River Park westward to Krieg Field and southward from the south shore of the Colorado River to an alignment proposed for South Lakeshore Boulevard between Pleasant Valley Road and Montopolis Drive. Predominantly floodplain, the proposed addition specifically includes sufficient land above the floodplain to accommodate construction of permanent structures and improvements. The combined area will fill the need for a large, metropolitan-scale park at the east end of the Corridor.

The second largest land area recommended for inclusion in Town Lake Park is the zone north of Barton Springs Road between Barton Creek and the Missouri Pacific Railroad bridge. Called Pecan Gardens in the Plan, the acquisition is intended to be developed as a Tivoli Gardens-like family entertainment center which will physically and functionally complement the recreational facilities of Zilker Park and the proposed cultural activity of Auditorium Shores. Portions of this area, Butler Shores and PARD headquarters, are already parkland; others like Zachary Scott Theater Center are City-owned properties. Because commercial activity, such as dining and entertainment, is integral to the Pecan Gardens concept, the pattern of public ownership need not include private land where its development is compatible with the overall concept. Specifically, parcels abutting the intersection of Barton Springs Road and South Lamar Boulevard and some frontage properties to the west along Barton Springs Road offer opportunity for private enterprise to benefit mutually with public development in immediate proximity to each other. The limited depth of developable land south of Barton Springs Road, the desire to protect the vegetated slopes rising from the road, and the opportunity to extend the landscape character of Zilker Park eastward along the roadway suggest the incorporation into the park area of available parcels south of Barton Springs Road.

more peaceful lake edge. The Zachary Scott Theatre will remain and possibly expand on its existing site. Assuming the possible future relocation of PARD offices to a municipal office complex or other public facility, the Parks and Recreation Building would become a candidate for adaptive reuse as a cultural facility. Parking for the Pecan Gardens will be located at southeast and southwest corners of the parcel (initially on grade, eventually in parking structures) with access off both Barton Springs Road and Lamar Boulevard.

The Pecan Gardens will play an important part in extending the role of Town Lake Park to evening and nighttime uses as well as daytime ones. Dramatic and festive lighting -- particularly emphasizing the pecan trees -- will make it as beautiful at night as it is during the day.

The Pecan Gardens will become an important attraction in Austin's developing tourism industry as well as a popular attraction for its own citizens. There are no comparable developments in Texas that mix a scenic environment, entertainment, restaurants and family-oriented institutions in this way. The San Antonio River Walk contains scenic and restaurant elements but has always been constrained by its downtown location in adding other potentially complementary elements. Six Flags Over Texas and Astroworld address the family-oriented amusement elements of this proposal with some entertainment, but their isolation and their overtly commercial rather than public character again put them in a different category. The nature of the Pecan Gardens is designed to reflect a particular quality of Austin as a city. Its focus on the pecan groves, its limited scale, its integration with adjacent parks and Town Lake, and its orientation to music and performance will all make the Pecan Gardens unique to Austin. It will provide a particular amenity that visitors cannot find in their own home towns and that will evoke special memories of Austin.

Auditorium Shores

Auditorium Shores, including the recently dedicated 54 acres of contiguous parkland, is proposed to be a focus of Austin's cultural and interpretive facilities. This Cultural Park is envisioned as a setting for the placement of individual institutions united in their goals to enrich the cultural resources of the community. It will also accommodate outdoor assemblies for special events, such as the traditional Fourth of July concert and similar gatherings. Removal of the deteriorated retaining walls and their replacement with new topsoil and irrigation will improve the site's ability to accommodate occasional large crowds without extensive turf damage. To mitigate potential impacts

upon adjacent neighborhoods, enforceable policies regarding special events will need to restrict parking on residential streets, limit noise levels through acoustic technology, set acceptable curfew times and provide neighborhood security.

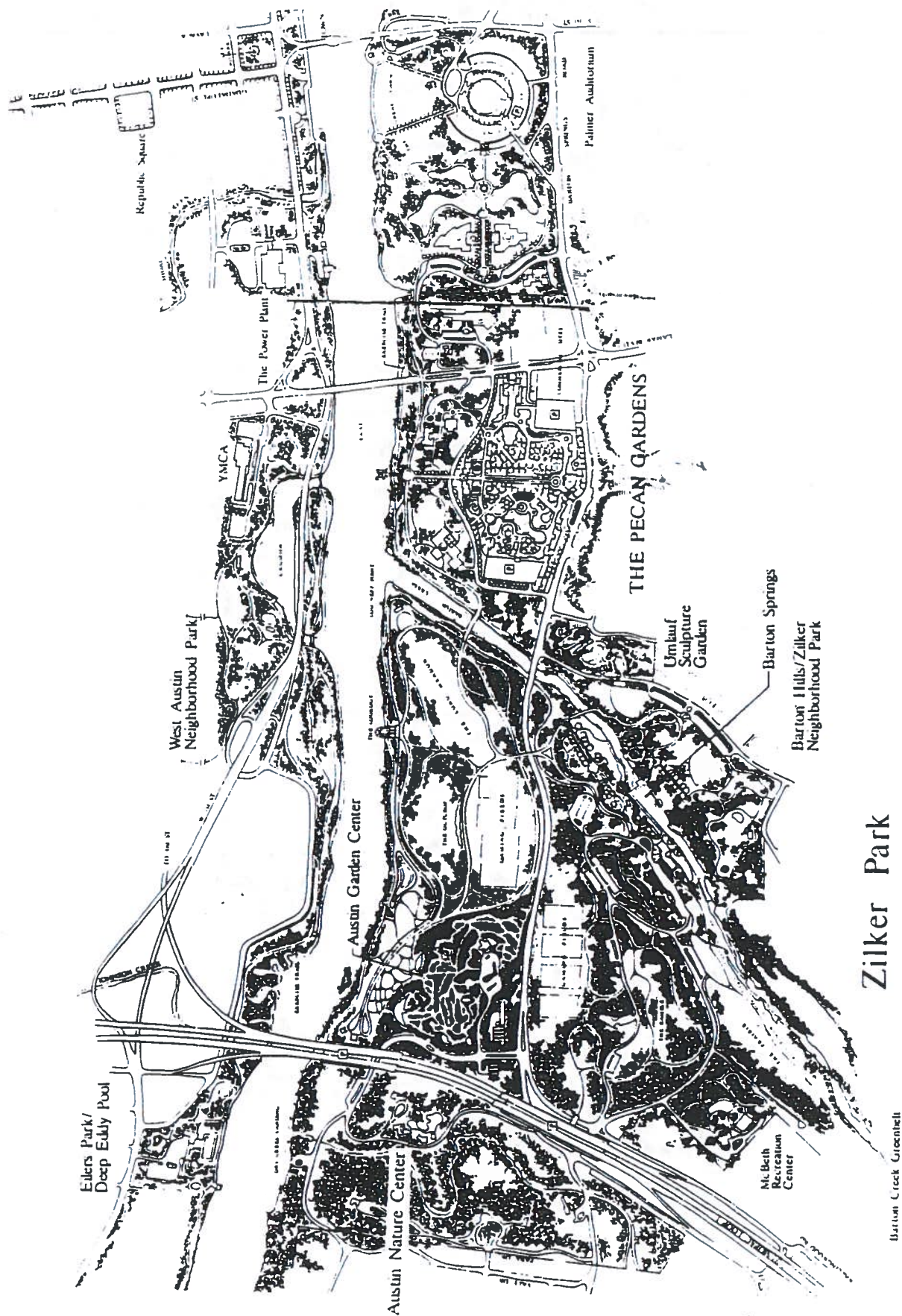
Palmer Auditorium, the area's most visible feature, will complement the cultural focus with performances, shows and events. Its parking, currently spread over most of the landscape, will be collected and accommodated in a gracefully terraced and richly landscaped structure surrounding all but the lake side of the auditorium. Riverside Drive is proposed to be vacated and its alignment abandoned through the site. The present road will terminate into the new parking structure. While a traffic impact analysis of this improvement is recommended, preliminary indications from the City's transportation department reveal no major concerns with the change. The open lawn that welcomes the lake environment up to the auditorium will be renovated and its existing oak-lined edges reinforced with additional plantings.

Sites for future museums and/or theatres are suggested on the west side of the Cultural Park, in an area currently occupied by the Coliseum and Dougherty Art Center. A park road links the sites together, providing convenience parking, and continues under the railroad bridge to additional sites facing Lamar Boulevard.

Between the cultural institutions and Palmer Auditorium, a lagoon is introduced to enhance the museum settings, afford additional recreational opportunity and mitigate the site's micro climate. As importantly, the lagoon will extend the visual perception of Town Lake nearer to Barton Springs Road to incorporate its significance into views of downtown's skyline from this significant artery. The lagoon's curving form is designed to give the visual impression of a much larger body of water. It is crossed twice by lighted bridges, graceful and refined in their design character. One of the bridges is proposed to incorporate the East Bouldin Creek flood bypass structure into its structural design, using this potentially formidable site constraint to advantage. Portions of the lagoon area adjacent to the museums are intended to exhibit intimate landscape details, such as colorful planting beds and finely crafted paving details, not found anywhere else in Town Lake Park but frequently associated with cultural park character. A wide promenade formed by an alle' of trees west of the lagoon reinforces the park's more formal character, forming a strong visual axis terminated by a large sculptural fountain east of the lagoon. The fountain also serves as a dramatic visual focal point for visitors entering the park from the proposed parking structure at Palmer Auditorium.



The Cultural Park at Auditorium Shores



Zilker Park

MOPAC to Drake Bridge



MEMORANDUM

TO: Parks and Recreation Board Members

FROM: Michael J. Heitz, AIA, Director
Parks and Recreation Department

DATE: October 26, 1993

SUBJECT: Zilker Garden Center Fence

The August 8, 1992 Bond Election included funds to construct a security fence around the Zilker Garden Center. The security fence was approved to correct a continuous pattern of minor crimes and vandalism. The Garden Center is the home for Austin's numerous garden clubs, and attracts visitors from throughout the nation. The garden club membership invests substantial time in planting and tending display plots for the public to enjoy. Also, the Garden Center collection contains rare and endangered plants, as well as newly hybridized ornamental plants given to the Garden Center for experimental purposes. The well-known Taniguchi Japanese Garden is dependent upon irrigation lines which are subject to periodic vandalism. It is critical that the Garden Center collection receive proper protection.

The Garden Center grounds are protected by a gate at the entry road, but pedestrians can enter at will. Although the grounds are monitored with available resources, there is no physical barrier to those wishing to remove plant materials or damage the facilities.

In order to implement the approved Garden Center Capital Improvements Program, the Parks and Recreation Department has begun design for a security fence. Following the Board's Design Review process, I am presenting the conceptual design for your review. More detailed plans will be presented following endorsement of the conceptual plan. Conceptual plan drawings will be available at the Parks Board meeting.

The conceptual plan includes construction of an ornamental metal fence around the entire perimeter of the Garden Center. Two vehicular gates are planned to permit entry by the public and maintenance vehicles. Additionally, pedestrian gates are planned at appropriate points around the Center. The fence alignment along Stratford Drive will reserve space for future construction of a hike and bike trail.

I am requesting approval of the conceptual design for the Garden Center security fence. Additional design details will be presented for review in future meetings.

Carlynn Nelson

for Michael J. Heitz, AIA, Director
Parks and Recreation Department



MEMORANDUM

TO: Parks and Recreation Board

FROM: Michael J. Heitz, AIA, Director
Parks and Recreation Department

DATE: October 26, 1993

SUBJECT: Zilker Playscape - Sand and Water Play Area

At its April 13, 1993 meeting, the Parks and Recreation Board approved entering into a proposed agreement with The Friends of the Parks for Improvements to Zilker Playscape. Three components included in the agreement were the Firetruck, the Playscape, and the Sand and Water Play Area. PARD staff was given the authority to review and approve all designs and plans for the improvements.

In conjunction with the Friends of the Park, the Zilker Playscape Committee has retained an artist, James Talbot, to design the Sand and Water Play Area portion of Zilker Playscape. The play area will be located in the currently vacant triangular space between the miniature train tracks and the Phantom Ship. Mr. Talbot is both an artist and a playground designer who studied under Dr. Joe Frost, a well known professor of child development, at The University of Texas at Austin. He specializes in fantasy playgrounds constructed with ferro-cement. As part of his contract, he has produced a model of the schematic design of a Sand and Water 'Seascape'.

The 'Seascape' is envisioned as a passive fantasyland of sea creatures, sandy beaches, and conch shells. Water would be in the form of play pumps and shell fountains. The whole area would be a setting for the production of sand castles and the stirring of youthful imaginations. Sand tables, rubberized safety surface and a variety of textures would provide access to the playscape and its activities to disabled children as well as disabled parents.

I am presenting the schematic design of the project to PARB for approval. Additional design details will be presented in future meetings.

Carole Nelson

for Michael J. Heitz, AIA, Director
Parks and Recreation Department



MEMORANDUM

TO: Parks and Recreation Board

FROM: Michael J. Heitz, AIA, Director
Parks and Recreation Department

DATE: October 26, 1993

SUBJECT: Questions Raised by Ron Cartlidge Regarding Lake Long

The following information was requested by Ron Cartlidge, Parks Board member. Mr. Cartlidge wanted to know if there were enough people swimming at Lake Walter E. Long to warrant creating a swim area. He also wanted to know if the Department had signs in place telling people to swim at their own risk.

In reference to enough swimmers to warrant the creation of a swim area, the answer is no. There are occasionally individuals who will enter the previously designated swimming area; however, it is used sporadically and by only a few park users.

In reference to signage:

At present, there are ten signs that say, **SWIM AT OWN RISK** and ten signs that say, **NO GUARD ON DUTY**. The signs are placed from the gate entry area to the parking areas and along the waters edge.

If you have any further questions, please let me know.


Michael J. Heitz, AIA, Director
Parks and Recreation Department

LAND AND FACILITIES COMMITTEE

AGENDA

October 26, 1993

5:00 PM

Parks and Recreation Department Main Office, CONFERENCE ROOM
200 South Lamar Blvd.

- 1.) Make recommendation to Council regarding proposed location for Austin Children's Museum
- (+) 2.) Make recommendation regarding the placement of the fence around the Zilker Botanical Gardens
- (+) 3.) Make recommendation regarding the Sand and Water Play Area at the Zilker Playscape.
- 4.) Presentation on the Zilker Hillside Theater Renovation.

Maximize play space, minimize ^{pure design} ~~hard surface~~